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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the teacher's use of such
informal techniques as observation and checklists to detect students'
particular instructional or behavioral needs, to detect areas of
strength or weakness, and to formulate remedial programs.
(Author/SBH)

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Informal Assessment Techniques

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Informal Assessment Techniques

According to Hammill and Bartel (1975) informal evaluation is used to detect areas of strength and weakness; to verify, probe, or discard the conclusions and recommendations based on the formal evaluation; to deduce the child's particular instructional or behavioral needs; and to formulate a remedial program for him. Informal techniques can be used to assess academic, physical, social, or behavioral areas.

Informal tests can be teacher-made or commercial-made. The teacher is usually the person to develop, administer, and use the findings. The administration of informal tests is assumed by the classroom teacher in order to obtain additional information about a child's educational or behavioral needs. The results obtained are also used by the teacher to more effectively plan a child's individualized educational plan.

Information about the child can also be obtained through observational techniques. These include anecdotal records, rating scales, checklists, and sociograms. Rating scales and checklists can also be teacher-made or commercial-made.

Observational Techniques

Anecdotal Records

The classroom teacher uses informal observation daily to appraise a student's performance in his work, in his play, and in his social interaction with other children. Through accurate and objective anecdotal records, the teacher can record specific situations. The anecdotal records provide invaluable information which can be used in parent-teacher conferences, permanent records, and provide additional information to the educational diagnostician or psychologist. Only the exact, observable behavior is recorded in anecdotal records.

Checklists

Checklists, teacher-made or commercial-made, consist of behaviors, characteristics, or traits. The statements are designed to indicate whether or not the person possesses a certain characteristic. Checklists can be completed quickly by the classroom teacher. An example of a teacher-made checklist follows:

Classroom Checklist (Check appropriate choice)

- ☐ 1. Daydreams
- ☐ 2. Selfish
- ☐ 3. Shy
- ☐ 4. Stubborn
- ☐ 5. Inattentive
- ☐ 6. Sullen
- ☐ 7. Tattles
- ☐ 8. Quarrelsome
- ☐ 9. Steals
- ☐ 10. Lies

Rating Scales

Rating scales are very similar to checklists. They also consist of behaviors, traits, or characteristics. Each item is rated along a continuum indicated by number (1-5), short descriptions, or one word indicators (always-sometimes-never.) Rating scales can be teacher-made or commercial-made. An example of a teacher-made rating scale follows:

Classroom Rating Scale (Check appropriate choice)

	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. Tattles	_____	_____	_____
2. Lies	_____	_____	_____
3. Cheats	_____	_____	_____
4. Fights	_____	_____	_____
5. Cusses	_____	_____	_____
6. Stutters	_____	_____	_____
7. Quarrelsome	_____	_____	_____
8. Destructive	_____	_____	_____
9. Daydreams	_____	_____	_____
10. Hyperactive	_____	_____	_____

Sociograms

Sociograms can provide valuable information to the teacher. Sociograms aid in understanding the social structure

of a classroom. Who are the most popular students? Who are the loners? The teacher usually asks the students to write down two or three students they would like to work with on special projects. Only the teacher sees the names of the students. This is an effective procedure for identifying students with possible social problems.

Informal tests

Informal tests must be carefully constructed and administered by the teacher. The items should be carefully selected and sequenced in order of difficulty (Karlin, 1971). Simple language must be used in informal tests, along with very concise directions (Charles, 1976).

Instruments that are included at this level of evaluation include: a) seatwork exercises emphasizing one specific skill; b) orally administered exercises; c) informal teaching lessons assessing various skills; and d) individually administered written assignments (Wallace and Kaufman, 1973). Informal evaluation is most frequently used in the academic areas of reading and math.

Math

The classroom teacher usually has the grade level a child is working at which was acquired through the administration of an achievement such as the Wide Range Achievement Test or the Peabody Individual Achievement Test. If a student is having problems in a specific area, the teacher needs

to find exactly where the weak areas lie. Is it in addition? If so, what specific steps under addition? To find this information, the teacher must develop her own checklist with the sequential skills for that particular grade level. An example follows of a readiness math checklist.

Math Checklist

Beginning skills	yes	no
1. Counts to 20 (rote)	_____	_____
2. Counts objects to 10	_____	_____
3. Writes numerals to 10	_____	_____
4. Recognizes numerals to 10	_____	_____
5. Recognizes shapes	_____	_____
circle	_____	_____
triangle	_____	_____
square	_____	_____
rectangel	_____	_____

Reading

Again, the teacher usually has the grade level a student can read, but not the specific skills unless a diagnostic reading test has been administered. The classroom teacher must find out specifically why the child is having problems. The area of reading can be divided into many skills: oral reading, reading comprehension, phonetic skills, word attack, and so on. An informal phonics survey follows:

Phonics Survey

Beginning consonants-Read the following list of words to the student, one word at a time. Tell him to write down the beginning letter of each word.

1. rise (r)
2. joke (j)
3. size (s)
4. tail (t)
5. dart (d)

Final consonants-This time write only the final letter of each word.

1. crab (b)
2. sill (l)
3. stomp (p)
4. buzz (z)
5. ram (m)

In summary, the classroom teacher can gain valuable information using informal techniques. Information can be gathered through anecdotal records, checklists, rating scales, sociograms, and informal academic tests. The teacher can better plan an individualized educational plan according to the behavioral or academic needs.

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